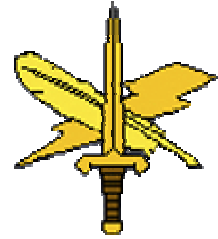




# NEWS RELEASE

**Public Affairs Office  
Fort Riley, KS 66442  
Telephone (785) 239-3033/3410 FAX (785) 239-2592  
After Hours (785) 239-2222  
E-mail: [stephanie.perrin@riley.army.mil](mailto:stephanie.perrin@riley.army.mil) or  
[skidmord@riley.army.mil](mailto:skidmord@riley.army.mil)  
[www.riley.army.mil](http://www.riley.army.mil)**



FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT  
Stephanie Perrin, Assistant Media Relations Officer (785) 239-3033

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## **K-9S, MP PARTNERS VIE FOR FORSCOM HONORS**

By Anna Morelock  
Staff writer

Spc. Aaron Hill found himself standing in the middle of a softball diamond dressed as a giant blue-clad chew toy April 25.

"I'm going to get eaten at least once today," he stated confidently as he waited for the next military working dog and its handler to approach the Fort Riley softball complex. They were part of the U.S. Forces Command Military Police K-9 Competition conducted on post April 24-27.

Hill's prediction came true when the second dog of the day walked his way onto the field to try his paw at the tactical obedience course. Under an obstacle, sniff the Kong, keep an eye on that guy in the blue suit, crawl through a tunnel and over some barrels...almost. Maybe just a few steps toward Hill?

"HEEL," the dog's handler projected. The dog turned and ran back to the task at hand. But, that blue guy was still just standing there. Finally, distracted enough, the dog gave in to the temptation and lunged, grabbing a big sharp-toothed mouthful of Hill's bite suit.

Other than his arm flailing about in the jaws of an MWD, Hill stood his ground and looked almost bored, as if having a dog hanging from his arm was a daily occurrence. For him, it probably was.

Some of the dogs were able to resist veering from the obstacle course but kept a wary eye on Hill just the same. Others seemed to not even notice him, intent on their handler's commands.

"Every event you'll learn something about your dog," said Spc. Brett Fishel of Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 97th Military Police Battalion. He was one of four Fort Riley handlers who participated in the event. Fishel tackled the course with 3-year-old Hary, an Operation Iraqi Freedom veteran who he's been working with for about three months.

The courses in the competition are kept secret from the handlers, so although Fishel and Hary spent about month training for the competition, there was no way to know exactly what they'd come up against until they walked up and saw it. Fishel said the

competition was a great way to learn how Hary reacted to different things. "We do our normal training but this is a little more in-depth ... a real good learning experience."

The tactical obedience course was the first part of the competition April 25. After a break for lunch, the handlers and dogs came back to show off their aggression.

In the first afternoon event, the dogs were set loose on Hill after he exchanged gunfire with the handler across the outfield. When the dog got about halfway to him, Hill threw down his weapon and gave up. The handler's job was to call the dog off.

After passing the first station, the dogs met a second suspect pacing behind orange barriers in center field. When the dog was released and ready to set into Sgt. Kevin Cameron, the second bite-suit clad lure of the afternoon, Cameron sent a trash can filled with metal tumbling down in front of the dog. Without hesitating most of the dogs charged around and found their mark despite the clanging distraction.

After completing the second station, the dogs were muzzled and went after Sgt. 1st Class Melvin Avis. Without the use of its jaws, the first dog through the course took off after Avis and tried to take him down using his body weight. Feet still on the ground, the MWD lunged at Avis, but Avis stood his ground.

"Now this is the dog to watch," commented the MPs on the sidelines as the second dog approached. When his handler released him at the third station, the dog took off after Avis, leapt through the air and hit Avis, knocking him off his feet.

During the rest of the week, the dogs worked on detection, sniffing vehicles, luggage and a warehouse for bombs and narcotics; doing building searches; scouting; and completing a 3 ½-mile road course with obstacles along the way.

Fishel said the road course was the toughest event. "It was long and hard, but we did really decent," he said. "I've learned that he won't go through certain obstacles, so maybe I need to work with him on more of those obstacles so he'll get used to them and be able to do them."